

DALCO PASSAGE AREA OIL SPILL

HEALTH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What precautions should I take?

Stay out of the water if you see oil or an oily rainbow-colored sheen. Remember to stay away from any workers that may be cleaning-up remaining oil. Let them do their jobs. In addition, please remember to respect private property in the area.

Can I eat shellfish from this area?

No. At this time they are considered contaminated. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is advising against recreational shellfish harvest in the following areas:

- From Point Defiance to Des Moines
- All of Quartermaster Harbor
- Southeast shoreline of Maury Island from Piner Point to Point Robinson
- From the Narrows Bridge north up Colvos Passage to the Southworth Point

Can I eat seaweed from this area?

No. At this time it is considered contaminated. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is advising against seaweed harvest in the area described above.

Can I eat crabs from this area?

Two common sense guidelines have been useful after other oil spills. First, look over the crab and make sure there's no visible oil on its surface. Second, smell the crab to assure that there is no detectable oil smell and rinse thoroughly. Since crabs are more mobile than molluscan shellfish, they can better avoid oil spills like this one. Crab harvested from the beach may present a higher risk.

Can I eat fish caught from this area?

The guidelines for crab are useful for finfish as well.

What is in the oil that can make people sick?

PAHs, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons. These are a group of over 100 chemicals that can be found in crude oil, coal tar and creosote. People are exposed to PAHs daily, through tobacco smoke, wood smoke and contaminated air. Another common source of PAH exposure is through eating cooked foods, like charbroiled meat.

What are the health risks of PAHs?

For most people an occasional brief contact with a small amount of oil, while not recommended, will do no harm. However, some people are especially sensitive to chemicals, including PAHs. They may have an allergic reaction or develop skin rashes even from brief contact with oil.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has determined that extended exposure to some PAHs may cause cancer. Some people who have breathed or touched mixtures of PAHs and other chemicals for long periods of time have developed cancer.

What should I do if oil gets on my child or me?

Avoid prolonged skin contact with oil. If oil gets on your skin, wash it off with soap and water. Sometimes rubbing a gentle "baby oil" product onto the skin and washing it off again will help. Do not use solvents, gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel, or similar products to clean your skin.

How can I help?

At this point the best thing for you to do is let the clean-up crews do their job. Anyone finding oil on the beach after the clean-up crews have left the area should call the Washington State Department of Emergency Management at 1-800-258-5990.

Resources

For more information on health risks from the spill, please contact the following people.

Washington State Department of Health
Food Safety & Shellfish Programs
Bill Cleland (360) 236-3306

Public Health - Seattle & King County
Water Recreation and Schools Program
Eileen Hennessy
(206) 205-3489

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Environmental Health Division
Ray Hanowell (253) 798-2845

Kitsap County Health District
Water Quality Program
Shawn Ultican (360) 337-5622

For up to date health advisory information visit our website at www.doh.wa.gov and follow the link, or go directly to <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/dalco-oil-spill.htm>



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